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(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR VIDEO GAMES AND ADVERTISING SEQUENCES

## (57) Abstract

Apparatus is disclosed for playing a game in which a player representative unit has the opportunity to perform simulated tasks. The apparatus is arranged to present one or more advertising sequences of video pictures advertising goods or services other than to play the game. The advertisements may with advantage relate in some way to the game and can be presented as a part of the environment in which the player representative unit performs the simulated tasks.

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## Apparatus for video games and advertising sequences

This invention relates to apparatus for playing a game.

The invention is particularly concerned with apparatus for playing a game of the type having control means (e.g. a joystick) manipulable by a player to provide control signal, and display means (e.g. a dedicated computer and video display unit) for presenting a player with video pictures simulating real or imaginary situations in which a player representative unit is controlled by the control signals, the player representative unit having the opportunity to perform simulated tasks.

In accordance with the invention, such an apparatus is arranged to present one or more advertising sequences of video pictures advertising goods or services other than to play the game.

In one arrangement, a said sequence is presented on completion of a task, or the gain or loss of a point in a scoring system in the game or the completion of a set time.

In another, additional or alternative arrangement, the tasks are performed in the face of a plurality of simulated obstacles and in which the player representative unit has one or more lives liable to loss in overcoming the obstacles, the sequence being presented when the player representative unit loses a life.

The advertisements may with advantage relate in some way

to the game. For example, having lost a life, the player may be encouraged to rebuild her or his strength with so and so product.

In a yet further additional or alternative arrangement, a sequence is presented as a part of the environment in which the player representative unit performs the simulated tasks, for example, the sequence may present a simulation of an advertising hoarding.

In order to allow the owners of the apparatus to charge conveniently for the presentation of adverts, the video data relating to one or more adverts may be contained in one or more removable data store units.

Most preferably, the or each removable data store unit includes a read only replaceable memory unit in which data for the one or more advertising sequences are stored. A memory unit containing an advert can thus simply be plugged into the machine for a period for which payment has been made and removed thereafter.

Alternatively, the or each removable data store may include data for preventing its operation more than a predetermined number of times or after a predetermined date or time, so that removal can be at the convenience of the owner of the apparatus.

The apparatus may be arranged to present advertising sequence or sequences when the game is not being played.

One embodiment of the invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawing which shows schematically apparatus

embodying the invention.

Referring to the drawings, the apparatus has a video display unit 2 to which video signals are supplied by a central processing unit (CPU) 4. A program which determines operation of the CPU is stored in a program store 6 which may be read only memory or a disc or tape store in which latter case the CPU includes memory into which the program is loaded for operation.

In order to enable a player to interact with the apparatus, a key board, key pad or in this case a joystick 8 is provided. This is manipulated by the player to provide control signals to the CPU.

In operation, the CPU provides video signals to the VDU to present a player with moving video pictures simulating real or imaginary situations in which a player representative unit is controlled by the control signals. The player representative unit may be the figure of a real or imaginary character in the game, for example. In the game the player representative unit has as an objective to perform simulated tasks. There may be a plurality of simulated obstacles. A task might be to rescue another character, or find some object. The obstacles might be other offensive characters who attack the player representative unit which has one or more lives liable to loss in overcoming the obstacles.

When a life is lost the game may terminate. Usually, however, the player representative unit has a number of lives which have to be lost before the game is

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terminated. In some games, lives may be regained or replenished.

At the point a life is lost, it has been proposed for the program to enter a routine which displays some simulated effect, e.g. an explosion, and to decrement the number of lives. The present invention now proposes to display a video advertisement. To this end a separate video store 10 is provided containing data which when addressed by the CPU is arranged to present one or more advertising sequences of video pictures advertising goods or services. The advertisements may with advantage relate in some way to the game. For example, having lost a life, the player may be encouraged to rebuild her or his strength with so and so product, "never mind have a Coke and try again".

In other arrangements the game may be a race, e.g. a motor race, the task being to win; a team game e.g. soccer, the task again being to win; flight simulation, the task being to fly safely from one point to another or to complete a circuit of an airfield, and so on. The advertising sequence may be presented on completion of a task, e.g. having won the race or game of soccer, or having completed a successful flying mission. The sequence may be presented on gaining or loosing a point in a scoring system in the game, e.g. scoring a goal in a game of soccer.

The video image presented to the player may contain advertisements as a part of the environment in which the player representative unit performs. For example, as in real life, an advertising hoarding may be presented by a

simulated road. In a game performed in an arena, e.g. soccer, the perimeter of the arena may present advertisements.

The video store preferably includes a read only memory and is removable as a unit so that adverts may be paid for and displayed for a period, then removed or replaced. Each read only memory unit may contain one or more adverts. In an alternative, the video store may also be a disc store in which case the CPU preferably includes memory into which the video data is loaded during operation. In either case, the video store may include data which prevents the or an advert from being presented in accordance with some predetermined criterion such as the date or the number of times the advert has been presented. In the case of a disc store, the CPU is responsive to that data, but in the case of a read only memory, that could alternatively be provided on a board with circuitry responsive to the data.

In another alternative, the video store also contains a program to which control of the CPU is handed when a life has been lost. The advert or adverts then run under control of their own program and control is handed back to the main game program when the advert program has run. That provides greater flexibility since the video data does not need a particular format to suit the particular game program.

It is usual for the games apparatus to display a title or introductory sequence when no one is playing the game. The present apparatus is also arranged to present the

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advertising sequence or sequences alternating with the game's own title or introductory sequence.

In a further example the advertising sequence or sequences may be down loaded from a central computer, thus being replaceable by under control of a manager. The central computer may be remote, controlling a plurality of games apparatus by connections via telephone lines or other transmission media.

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for playing a game, comprising: control means manipulable by a player to provide control signals, display means for presenting a player with video pictures simulating real or imaginary situations in which a player representative unit is controlled by control signals, the player representative unit having the opportunity to perform simulated tasks in the game, wherein the apparatus is arranged to present one or more advertising sequences of video pictures advertising goods or services other than to play the game.

2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a said sequence is presented on completion of a task, or the gain or loss of a point in a scoring system in the game or the completion of a set time.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the tasks are performed in the face of a plurality of simulated obstacles and in which the player representative unit has one or more lives liable to loss in overcoming the obstacles, the sequence being presented when the player representative unit loses a life.

4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a sequence is presented as a part of the environment in which the player representative unit performs the simulated tasks.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein

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the sequence presents a simulation of an advertising hoarding.

6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, including one or more removable data store units each containing video information for one or more advertising sequences.

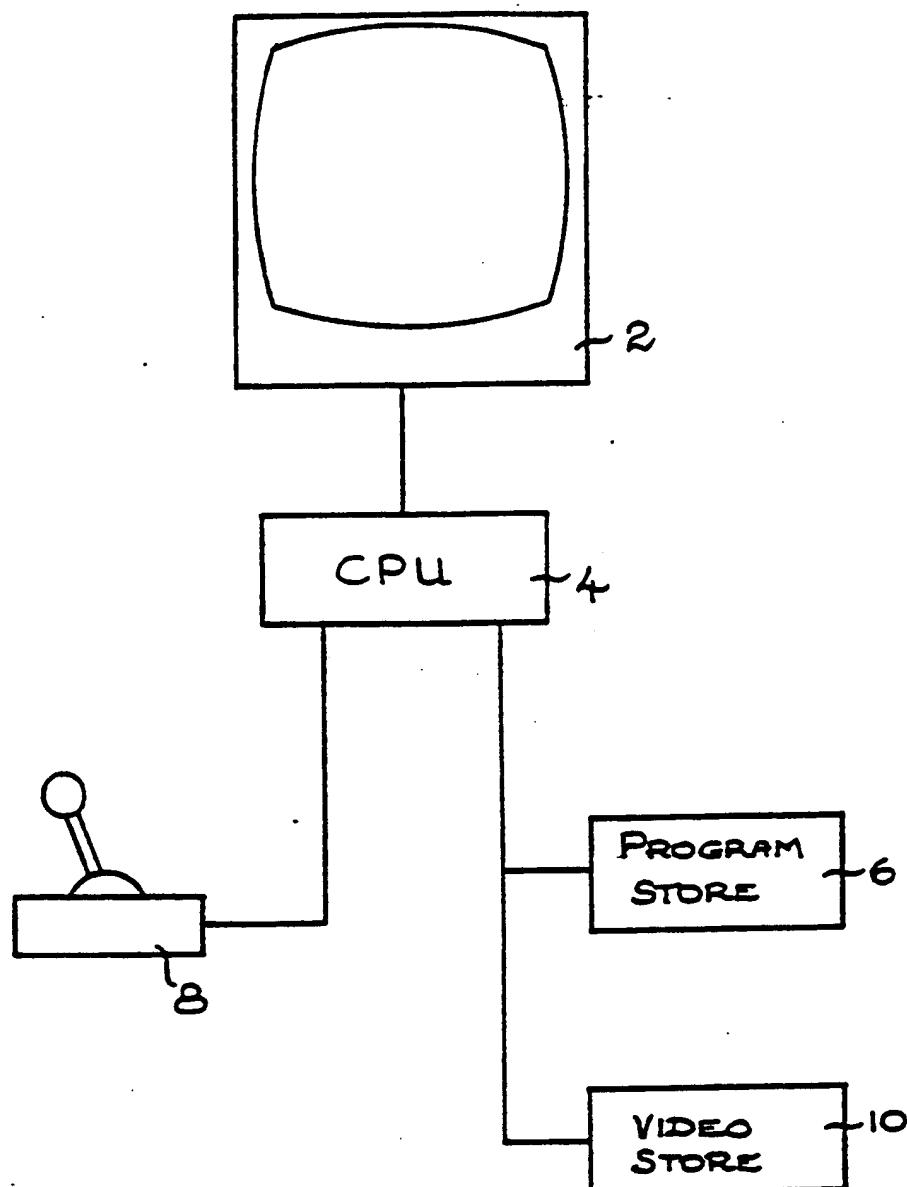
7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the or each removable data store unit includes read only memory in which data for the one or more advertising sequences are stored.

8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the or each removable data store includes data for preventing its operation more than a predetermined number of times or after a predetermined date or time.

9. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein the or each removable data store includes data for preventing its operation more than a predetermined number of times or after a predetermined date or time.

10. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, arranged to present the advertising sequence or sequences when the game is not being played.

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## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 93/00905

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all)<sup>6</sup>

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

Int.C1. 5 A63F9/22; G09F23/14

## II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched<sup>7</sup>

| Classification System | Classification Symbols |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Int.C1. 5             | A63F ; G09F            |

Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation  
to the Extent that such Documents are included in the Fields Searched<sup>8</sup>III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT<sup>9</sup>

| Category <sup>10</sup> | Citation of Document, <sup>11</sup> with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages <sup>12</sup>   | Relevant to Claim No. <sup>13</sup> |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| X                      | GB,A,2 141 907 (M. GILMORE ET.AL.)<br>3 January 1985   | 1-3,6-10                            |
| A                      | see page 1, line 23 - line 82<br>see page 2, line 28 - line 64<br>see page 2, line 109 - page 3, line 11<br>see figures 3,4                                | 4,5                                 |
| X                      | DE,A,3 048 393 (DYNAMICS MARKETING GMBH)<br>22 July 1982   | 1-3,6-10                            |
| A                      | see page 4, line 1 - page 5, line 30<br>see page 5, line 35 - page 7, line 31  | 4,5                                 |
| A                      | US,A,5 009 426 (AUXIER)<br>23 April 1991<br>see column 1, line 64 - column 2, line 4<br>see column 3, line 39 - line 61<br>see column 9, line 42 - line 48 | 4,5                                 |

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## IV. CERTIFICATION

1 Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

07 JULY 1993

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report

21.07.93

International Searching Authority

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

Signature of Authorized Officer

WENTZEL J.F.

ANNEX TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT  
ON INTERNATIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO.

GB 9300905  
SA 73473

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on. The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information. 07/07/93

| Patent document cited in search report | Publication date | Patent family member(s) |         | Publication date |
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| US-A-5009426                           | 23-04-91         | AU-B-                   | 618518  | 02-01-92         |
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|  |                  | US-A-                   | 4758000 | 19-07-88         |

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

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